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ABSTRACT

The Political World Interview asks the adolescent to imagine a group of people going to a new island where they must set up laws and a government. The interview then probes their reasoning by raising a series of hypothetical proposals and rules. For example, one item asks if the government should require all people to go to church. Designed to tap the adolescent's reasoning processes, the items deal with issues faced by democracies and governments generally, such as limitations on power, on majority rule, and the need for laws and government. Also included is the Coding Manual with directions for scoring. For a related article, "The Growth of Political Ideas and Their Expression Among Young Activists", Journal of Youth and Adolescence, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1974, see EJ 105 039. (RC)

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POLITICAL WORLD INTERVIEW
(SHORT VERSION)

1. Say these jacks (placed in a bunch in front of the subject) are people, or groups, or whatever you want them to be, and they're going to a new island somewhere where they want to make up a new government or country where everyone can live together as well as anyone ever could. What kind of government do you think they should have? Use the jacks to set it up. (Follow with gentle probes, such as "Anything else" or "Why?" Try not to suggest or lead).

(If after a while there is still no official government ask "Could they do whatever they want?" "Why or why not?" What's to stop them: Anybody else besides those in the government?)

2. Who's the most powerful on the island? Why?

3. Could he(or the government) tell the others what to do all the time? Why or why not?

4. If you lived on the island, could the government tell you what to do?

   What kinds of things could it tell you to do?

5. Does the governement ever do things that are bad for the people? What might they do? What would happen then?

6. Is there anything the government cannot tell you to do? What? Why?

6a. Can it tell you to brush you teeth? Why? (or why not?)

6b. Can it tell you to go to school? Why?

Why might they have a rule that all kids have to go to school until they are 16?*

What if a father said, "My kid is going into business and won't need school for that?" *

6c. Can the government tell you to go to church? (why or why not?)

6d. (Ask if applies) how come the government can tell you to go to school but not to brush your teeth? (or contrast school to church)

7. How do the people in the government get their jobs? Why?

8. Do you need a government on the island, or does it matter?*

9. Do you need laws on the island?* Why?

   What kinds?

From Adelson, J. and O'Neil, R. "Growth of political ideas in adolescence," * J. Person. Soc. Psychol., 1966, 295-306.

10. Who makes the laws?

11. Can the people say bad things about the President(government) or call him names? Why?

12. Who is more important on the island the President (or government or the people? ...Why?

13. What if 10 people wanted a law, and 8 didn't? What would happen? (if says majority rules) What's so good about majority rule, anyway?

14. Can the government make the people vote? Why? What's important about voting anyway?

15. What if there were a few more poor people on the island than rich people, and when the government voted it voted that the rich had to give some of their money to the poor. The rich people were against it, but there were more poor people, so the vote won. Would the rich have to obey a law like that?

    Why? Would they have to, or would it just be nice if they did?

    What would be a reason for a law like that, anyway.

16. What if some people wanted a different kind of government? What might that be like (what might the government look like)? What might yet another look like?

    Can they say things like that? That they want a new government?

17. What if the majority made a rule that nobody could dress like hippies?

18. In some places there is a rule that if you want to vote you have to own something, like a house or something big like that. The reason is if you own something you will be sure to care about what the government does because you don't want anything to happen to what you have. If you don't own anything, you might vote carelessly. Is that a good rule to have? (If yes) What about the poor people?

19. Now if you take the government you made, how similar is it to the U.S. government? In what ways? ...How else is it similar?

    How is it different? How else is it different?

    Which is better? Why? Anything else better about it?

    Is there anything else better about it? Is there anything better about the U.S. government? Anything else?

Definition of the Types (Q. 1)

I. Mainly non-political, concrete structures, or political and non-political objects on equal level of importance. Subject usually talks about politics, when he talks about politics per se, as people--even the term government may be referred to as "he." Usually is an emphasis on positive interpersonal feelings--friendliness, helpfulness of authorities and individual people--as well.

II. Concrete political structures with few/no non-political structures, but no interrelationships between structures other than simple hierarchical structure carried over from Type I (lower branch helping higher branch or doing what higher branch says).

III. Concrete structures and processes (i.e., considerable amount of discussion about how structures or groups interact). Usually this type is accompanied by a consideration of what will work--but the defining criteria is interrelationship between structures with only a weak use of principles (Type IV).

IV. Principles central; usually lots of discussion and distinctions pertaining to ideal vs. real.

All-embracing attitudes (#20, 21, 23, 29): The view that everyone will be happy with a decision. For example:

(In some places you have to own something if you want to vote. Do you think that's a good idea).

It's a good one.

(Why?)

Because the President would like that.

(Why would he like it)

Mmm, because everybody else would too.

(What about the poor people, how would they get to vote)

They would get to vote in some places where you didn't have to make much money.

(Score 1 pt. each).

Principles (Throughout interview). Principle is valued in and of itself, and is a general, abstract rule for behavior. The Kantian philosopher Hare speaks of covering principles. Examples: "It doesn't matter; the people are supposed to run the government." "They can say anything because they have freedom of speech and the other freedoms in the Bill of Rights." Social mechanisms, such as voting and majority rule, are not scored as principles if they are valued for pragmatic reasons--e.g., voting is the way to get the best man into office or majority rule is to reach the best or quickest decision. Voting is a principle, for example, if "It is the way the people have the say." (Score 1 pt. each)

Biological Life-supportive Orientation (Throughout interview). Any comment about health, eating to stay alive, shelter--basic biological needs. Do not score simple reference to money; reference must indicate that the reason for money is fulfill basic biological need. Also, do not score "building houses," unless the idea is implied that shelter is necessary to live; it is implied, for example, in "If he didn't respect poor people, they'd go homeless." Score only for necessities; do not score "then people would fight."
(Score 1 pt. each. On Q. 20, score 1 pt. for spontaneous reference to life-supportive need; ½ pt. for reference after probing).

Right and Wrong (Absolute moralizing, moral realism) (Throughout interview, but particularly Qs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 19-). S says there is a right way--e.g., "The President can only do the right things," but S cannot elaborate, except by citing examples ("He can't tell you jump off the bridge."). The assumption is that there is only one right way. If the S say that what some consider right others might not, he is taking role of two people, and this is not scored. Also, do not score factual, rather than moral use of the words "right" and "wrong." For example, do not score "That wouldn't work out right, the economy would be in trobble."
(Score 1 pt. each).

Niceness, friendliness, meanness (Throughout interview). Any use of these terms. S is thinking in interpersonal, rather than legalistic terms. (Score 1 pt. each).

Power:

Unlimited Support for Authority (Throughout interview). No limitations at all. When probed, S may reply, "He's the boss." "He owns the island." Score any reference to the fact that the leader makes the decisions. (Score 1 pt. each).

Arbitrary Limits on Authority (Qs. 2, 4, and 6). Trying to limit power, but has recourse to very unclear, abritrary judgments. For example, "He can only tell you the important things to do"--without specifying how anyone would know what that meant. Or, S just gives examples--e.g., "He

can't tell you to kill yourself." Do not score "right and wrong" here--this is a separate code. (1 pt. each reference)

Functionalism (Throughout interview). Score reference to idea of keeping society as a whole "in order," "functioning," "organized." Must be a general idea, implying society as a whole is what needs to keeping functioning, not a specific action. For example, do not score, "Names (calling him names) wouldn't hurt him (the President)."
(Score 1 pt. each).

Note: Throughout interview, except for Life-Supportive Code, refers to all questions after Q. 1.

Need for Government (Q. 8)

a) Government takes care of people.

b) Government helps the President (thinks of government as person, usually saying government is not necessary).

c) Needs government for prevention of violent impulses.

d) Necessary for organization--otherwise things won't get done.

e) expresses some doubt

(Note: Subject may score in more than one category--code all).

Responses to Q. 31 --Comparison between Ideal Government and U.S.

Concrete responses--physical aspects of island (e.g., size, or mentions which is real

Personalistic responses--Talks about niceness or friendliness of people or leader. Talks about government as "he."

Specific institutions--Mentions which has different or more institutions, but no idea of interrelationships. E.g., "The U.S. has two things in the Senate..." or "It has more rules..."

Organization--Discusses the organization of government, the efficiency overall.

Principles--Any mention of a principle (right, freedom, rule for participation, etc.).

Coding Manual

(Study II)

Personalism

Items: Entire Interview

Definition: A concern for how people will interact, with emphasis on contact, closeness, familiarity, involvement, trust, care and consideration.

1 point for each specific reference to interact styles among people.

Examples: "Everybody would know each other..." "There'd be a lot more personal contact" "There could be a sensitivity between people."

½ point for general, vague comments about the psychological qualities of groups.

Example: "They'd all get along. "There would be a unity ..."

1 point responses, in contrast to ½ point responses, typically apply to interaction between two particular people. But there are a few exceptions, where the individual's feeling of belonging to the group is described in sufficient psychological detail to warrant a 1 point classification. For example, "His feeling of being in the group would be so close, it would be like feeling part of a family..."

The Need for Laws and Human Nature

Item: Question 10 (Do you need laws on the island?)

Classify each subject according to one of the following categories.

1. Answers "yes," and indicates that he considers mankind in general as basically dangerous, bad, and in need of control.

2. Answers "yes," but says that some criminals or criminal behavior always will be present.

3. Expresses doubt about the necessity of laws, especially in the future. "It would depend on how advanced socialism is." "Not if the people respect each other."

4. Answer "no," laws are unnecessary, period. Man is good.

Can't judge: Insufficient information or difficult, mixed response.

The Need for Government

Item: Question 8 (Do you need a government?")

Classify each subject according to one of the following categories.

The Need for Government (Cont.)

1. Answers "Yes," government is necessary to control man, to "keep people from fighting,""taking more than their share."

2. Answers "Yes," but stresses organization. The emphasis is not on conflict, but on the confusion which would result without government. "People would feel lost." "Some minimal form of organization is necessary."

3. Says that government may not be necessary in the future.

4. No, it's not necessary.

5. Can't judge.

Biological Life-Supportive Concern

Items: Entire interview, excluding Q. 6c and 34.

Definition: A concern for how people will find food and shelter and stay alive and healthy.

Score 1 point for responses presented as a major theme.

Examples: "Well, first of all, the first thing they're gonna have to do is play how they're gonna nourish themselves." "

Score ½ point for vague or indirect response.

Example: "You would need experts to get the most out of production." "Everyone's needs would be met (unspecified)."

Denial of Predicament

Items: Entire interview, excluding Qs. 8, 10, 20, and 33.

Score 1 point for each response arguing that the predicament raised by the question would not arise.

Denial of Predicament (Cont.)

Example: (Q. 14 "....People became suspicious") "That wouldn't happen; they might be a little nervous, but they would love him from before."

This is scored both under Denial of Predicament and Personalism.

Principles

Items: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19a, 22, 23, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

Definition: Abstract, comprehensive rules under which individual situation can be judged. The Kantian philosopher Hare speaks of "covering principles."

Score 1 point each.

Democratic Principles: Reference to basic freedoms, rights, equality, popular rule, and representation.

Examples: "My government would be based on equality."
"It would be run by the will of the people."

Don't score democratic procedures, such as voting and majority rule, even though they stem from the principle of popular representation, unless the subject actually states this principle. Don't score for example, "And let's see, the population votes and here's the President...." or "In that case, I'd say the majority has it." When probed, subjects sometimes justify these procedures on purely pragmatic grounds; majority rule is seen simply as a way of getting things done, and voting is seen, for example, as the best way to get in the man you want. The statement, "Voting is the way for the people to express their will" is scored a principle; the principle of popular rule is explicitly stated.

General Social Principles. A few principles are not strictly democratic ones. For example, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." These are scored. But do not score ambiguous statements that are not clearly stated rules. For example, "My government would meet the people's needs" is a borderline case which sounds like a principle, perhaps, but it also is a descriptive statement that could be justified (and often is) on pragmatic grounds--i.e.,"If their needs aren't met, some will want to revolt, so it's best to meet them."

Many values Ss express, such as people loving each other, caring about each other, and trusting each other, also may have principles behind them, but are not scored as Principles unless they are stated as abstract, comprehensive rules.

Score: "It would be based onthe concept of brotherhood." "It would be based on a love of people rather than a love of dollars."

Do not score: "They wouldn't do that because they would feel more like brothers and sisters." "They would love him from before."

Responses to Q. 38 (Comparing Ideal Societies to U. S.)--Distance from Government in U.S. and Lack of Opportunity for Popular Participation.

Score these themes, 1 point each.

Distance: "My government would be different ; the government now is out there and away instead of being here with me."

Blocks participation: "The people would have a greater say in mine."

Political Activism

Items: See Political Activism Interview

Definition: Extent of participation in radical left-wing politics.

A. 1 point for each time attended rally or public meeting protesting public policy. Maximum = 4 points.

B. 1 point for each time engaged in picketing on behalf of a cause. Maximum = 4 points.

C. 4 points for engaging in civil disobedience leading to arrest or jail (must have been intentional).

D. 4 points for active, continuing membership in organization or social action project. For example, community store front, socialist organization. Must have been member for 3 months. Do not score, "I went to some meetings off and on to see what it was like."

2 points for current membership in project or organization where membership has been less than 3 months (organization is long-term).

1 point for each more short-term project--may have involved collecting petitions, sitting in, or other organizational work for particular goal such as housing for poor.

1 point for past membership in long-term organization, membership terminated.

Maximum = 4 points.

Note--participation is scored only for activities outside conventional politics. Do not score, for example work for McGovern or Lindzey or for charity drives.